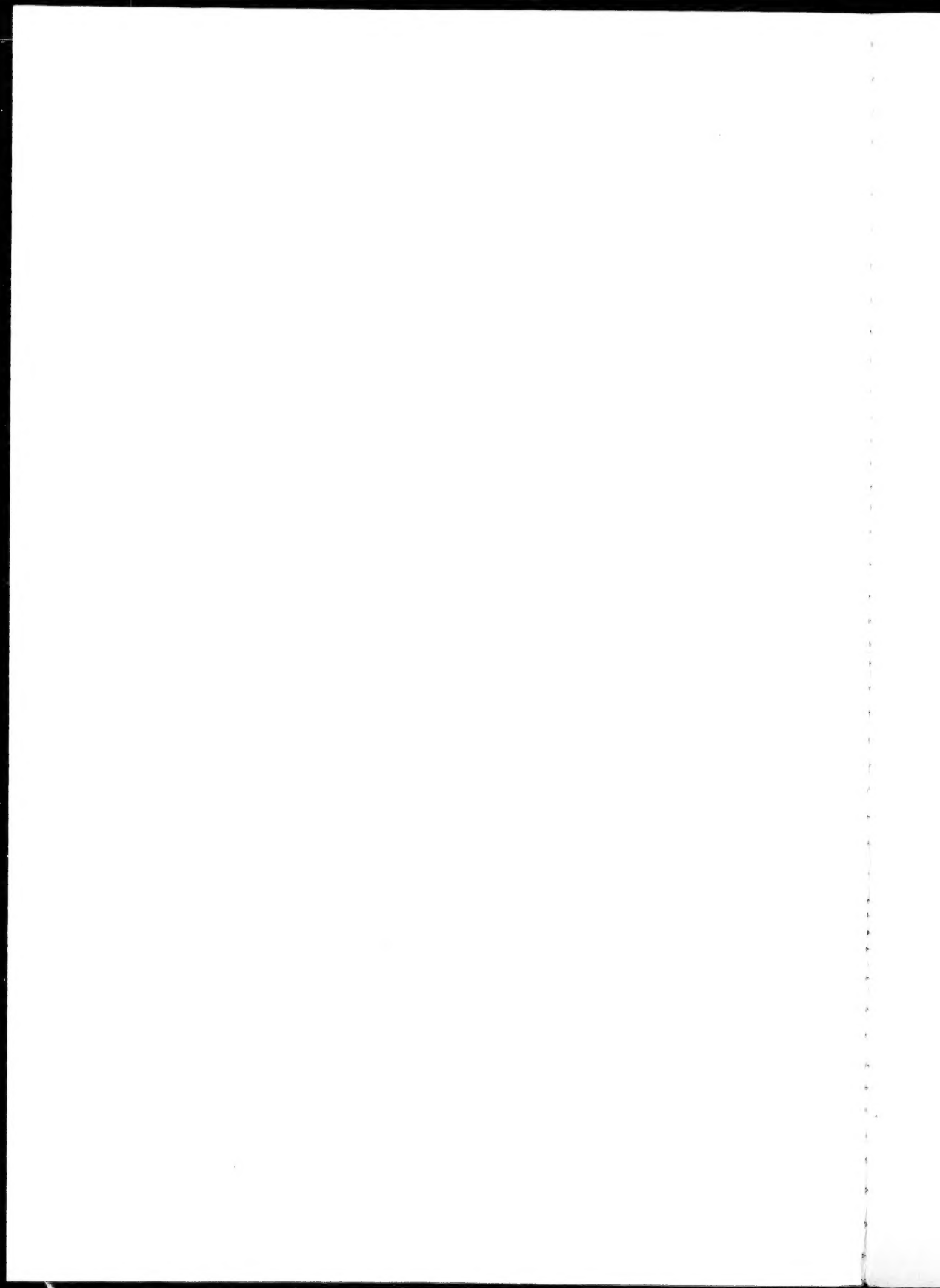




(A somewhat revised version)

The Falls of Niagara.

BY

EDWARD HARTLEY DEWART, D.D.



RE yet I saw the wild magnificence,
Which Nature here with peerless pomp unveils,
A solemn sound—a deep and sullen roar—
By which the earth was tremulously stirred—
Kindled a flush of mute expectant joy,
Quickening the pulses of my throbbing heart
And tingling through my veins like fire. But here,
Standing upon this rocky ledge above
The vast abyss which yawns beneath my feet,
In silent awe and rapture, face to face
With this bright vision of unrivalled glory
Which dwarfs all human pageantry and power,
This spot to me is Nature's holiest temple.
The sordid cares, the jarring strifes and vain
Delights of earth are stilled. The hopes and joys
Which gladden selfish hearts seem nothing here.

The massy rocks that sternly tower aloft,
And stem the fury of the wrathful tide—
The impetuous leap of the resistless flood,
An avalanche of foaming, curbless rage—
The silent hills, God's tireless sentinels—
The wild and wondrous beauty of thy form,
Which foam and spray forever shroud, as if
No mortal eye may see thy unveiled face—
Are earthly signatures of power divine.
O! what are grandest works of human art,
Column or arch, or vast cathedral dome,
To this majestic handiwork of God!

Unique in majesty and radiant sheen,
Earth has no emblems to portray thy grandeur.
Not loftiest lay of earth-born bard could sing,
All that thy presence whispers to the heart
That feels thy power. No words of mortal lips
Can fitly speak the wondering, gladsome awe—
The wild imaginings, thrilling and rare,
Which now, like spirits from some higher sphere,
For whom no earthly tongue has name or type,
Sweep through my brain in waves of surging thought.
My reason wrestles with a vague desire
To bound into thy boiling foam, and blend
My being with thy wild sublimity.

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As thy majestic beauty thrills and awes
 My soul, I am ennobled while I gaze ;
 Warm tears of pensive joy bedim my eyes,
 And grateful praise and worship silent swell,
 Unbidden, from my thrilled and ravished breast ;
 Henceforth this beauteous vision shall be mine—
 Engraved forever on my heart and brain.
 Stupendous power ! thy thunder's solemn hymn,
 Whose tones rebuke the shallow unbeliefs
 Of men, is still immutably the same.
 Ages ere mortal eyes beheld thy glory,
 Thy voice made music for the listening stars,
 And angels paused in wonder as they passed,
 To gaze upon thy weird and awful beauty,
 Amazed to see such grandeur this side heaven.
 Thousands, who once have here enraptured stood,
 Forgotten lie in death's lone pulseless sleep ;
 And when each beating heart on earth is stilled,
 Thy tide shall roll, unchanged by flight of years,
 Bright with the beauty of eternal youth.

Thy face, half-veiled in rainbows, mist and foam,
 Awakens thoughts of all the beautiful
 And grand of earth, which stand through time and change
 As witnesses of God's omnipotence.
 The snow-capt mountain in its regal pride,

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The birth-place of the avalanche of death—
The grand old forests, through whose solemn aisles
The wintry winds their mournful requiems chant—
The giant rivers rushing to the sea—
The thunder's peal—the lightning's awful glare—
The deep, wide sea, whose melancholy dirge,
From age to age makes melody divine—
The star-lit heavens, magnificent and vast,
Where suns and worlds in quenchless splendor blaze—
All grand and beautiful created things
Are linked in mystic brotherhood with thee,
And speak in tones above the din of earth
Of Him unseen, Author and Lord of all.

God of Niagara ! hear my trembling prayer !
To me let love and light divine be given,
To guide my erring feet in paths of truth,
And purify my dark and sin-stained heart ;
That while I muse upon thy glorious works,
And mark the tokens of thy presence here,
I may behold Thyself, and find in Thee
My strength, my light, my everlasting Friend.

TORONTO, CANADA.

—From "*Songs of Life*."

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